

# CONNECT

Number 73: February 1992

## YOUTH HOMELESSNESS AND UNEMPLOYMENT LINKS

Claire Lapp  
Melton Secondary College

**Introduction**

In my major project I am looking to find out whether there is a linkage between youth homelessness and unemployment in Melbourne and in Victoria. I am going to be looking at the social benefits that are available to young people and whether it is possible to live on them. I am going to look at the causes why young people are left homeless in Melbourne and in Victoria and the different reasons to them.

**Methodology**

Most of my information about homelessness in Melbourne was obtained by writing a letter to the Brotherhood of St Laurence and they sent me some information. Also at my school we have some information about homelessness in Melbourne and in Victoria. I obtained this information by talking to the Brotherhood of St Laurence and by talking to the Victorian Council on Social and Housing Services.

**Results**

In preparing this report...

**Conclusions**

The evidence on which my conclusion is based is the Young Homeless, Homeless Families and the Victorian Council on Social and Housing Services. I found that the Victorian Council on Social and Housing Services is a link between homelessness and youth unemployment in Melbourne and in Victoria.

**Evaluation**

The problem that I or my group had was that we were not sure if we were working in a way that was useful to the Victorian Council on Social and Housing Services. I am not sure if we were working in a way that was useful to the Victorian Council on Social and Housing Services.

## IS YOUTH HOMELESSNESS LINKED WITH YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN MELTON?

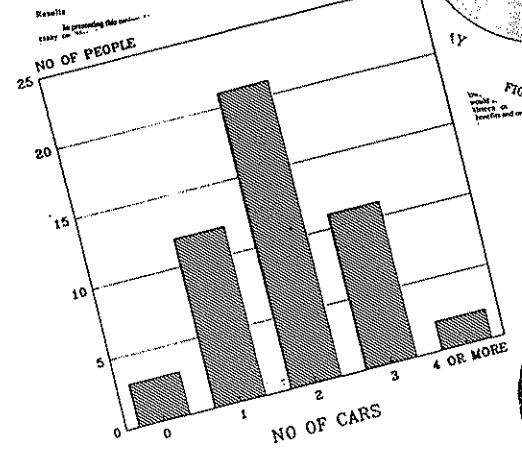
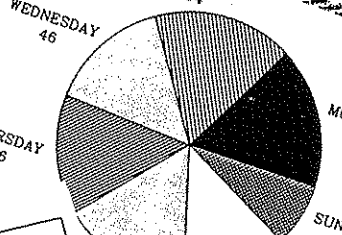
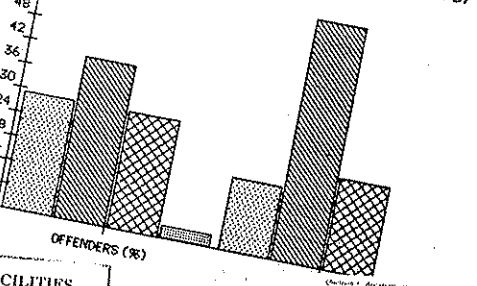
Unemployment in Melton

Approximately 650 to 700 young people are unemployed in Melton. There are many reasons for this.

**Problems which cause homelessness in Melton**

In Melton, it is a common sight to see young people on the streets. This is because of the high unemployment rate in Melton. The young people who are unemployed in Melton are often from the inner city and they are often from the inner city.

## Melton Juveniles' Opinion of Police Power



**FIGURES IN %**

The majority of the survey was conducted on Tuesday and Wednesday. The majority of the survey was conducted on Tuesday and Wednesday.

## SHOPPING FACILITIES

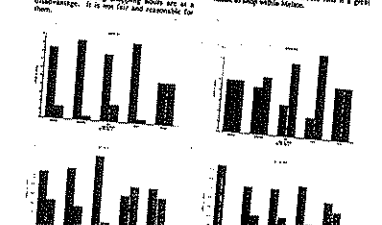
Jaron Manning, Heide, Mass  
Melton Secondary College

**Results**

In conducting the survey, we were able to find out what the shopping facilities in Melton are like. The majority of the survey was conducted on Tuesday and Wednesday.

**Question 1: Are trading hours suitable?**

The majority of residents in Melton believe that the trading hours are suitable. The majority of the survey was conducted on Tuesday and Wednesday.



# LOCAL RESEARCH

## A CURRICULUM APPROACH TO YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

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## Projects?

Historically minded readers of *Connect* may remember that it used to be called "the newsletter of youth participation in education projects". We also used to list projects that were 'alive and well'.

Somewhere along the road, we dropped the term 'projects'. This was in response to a broadening understanding of ideas about youth and student participation. Sure, specific projects that built upon and enhanced the 'active participation of young people - tutoring projects, media projects, research projects - were still important. But you didn't need to develop a 'project' to talk of student participation. What about the general idea of negotiated curriculum? What about overall approaches to student participation in school governance, partnerships in decision making and student representative organisations? What about a learning approach?

Articles in this issue of *Connect* raise the word 'project' again. George Wood (from the US Institute for Democracy in Education) argues for "Project-based Teaching", while Karen Adkins, writing in *Foxfire's Hands On* journal, says, "The Foxfire Approach is Not a 'Project'." Just semantics, playing with words? What do you think?

And then there's the description of the Melton students' research into issues around youth homelessness. We referred to this as the 'Australian Studies Curriculum Development Project' and one support person noted the value of an approach that had "a clear beginning and end, but with on-going implications." A project?

## Next Issue

In *Connect* 70, we featured the work of the Victorian School Community Development Program. Sadly, this Program, in the form described there, finished at the end of 1991. In South Australia, too, the PASS positions have apparently come to an end. More happily, an 'extended' Victorian School Community Program has been established in 1992, with appointments in each Region, and at a state level, with the specific brief of supporting student and parent participation. We hope to bring you more information about this in future issues of *Connect*. And more! Next deadline - end of March!

*Roger Holdsworth*

## CONNECT

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## COVER

Examples of Melton students' research results around youth homelessness; from *Educating Others; Educating Ourselves*. See page 3.

# MELTON STUDENTS RESEARCHING COMMUNITY ISSUES

## A CURRICULUM APPROACH TO YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

"The year's work has been really good - hard and helpful - but we will receive the better end of the bargain in the future, knowing all the information we received from the course."

"As well as our project educating others, it also educated ourselves."

"The course has made me look into our community with a critical eye."

"(It) proved to the older people who are in power ... that we are concerned with what we think Melton needs, and it also showed them that we are happy with some of Melton's facilities."

"When it comes down to it all, we are the ones that have to fight for what we want, if we are to achieve anything."

"These issues affect me, and no other subject allows me to research them."

These are the voices of some of the year 11 students from three Melton schools who took part in an exciting and challenging Australian Studies course in 1991. Not only did they develop strong views about crucial issues for young people in their local community, they based their arguments and opinions on those issues on extensive research of current attitudes and provisions within that community.

### Youth Homelessness and Curriculum Action

The 1991 project in which these students participated developed in response to community concerns about youth homelessness.

The Victorian Government established three Youth Homelessness Taskforces in 1989 following publication of the Burdekin Report. These Taskforces were to coordinate and develop services for homeless young people and young people 'at risk' of becoming homeless.

Melton is a 'satellite city' some 20 km from the western edge of Melbourne's suburbs. It was identified as having a large youth population, few services for young people, no emergency accommodation, few employment opportunities and high numbers of families under pressure. The Melton Youth Homelessness Taskforce began its work there in 1990.

A priority of the Taskforce was the establishment of constructive partnerships between community agencies and local schools. This was seen not as simply a matter of resource or service provision, but also as a development of processes that would enhance the power that young people in Melton had over their lives.

A curriculum approach to youth homelessness was vital: "An approach to teaching and learning that attempts to give students increased understanding of and power over issues in their local community, issues about which students can and will take action, will assist in

preventing some of the causes of youth homelessness."

The first step was to provide teachers with time and support for curriculum development. With funding from the Victorian Ministry of Education's Students at Risk Program and from the Office of Youth Affairs, through the Youth Homelessness Taskforce, two in-service days were organised in 1990. An open invitation was extended to interested teachers from the local secondary schools - about a dozen attended. From the discussions on these days, three teachers (who would be teaching four Australian Studies classes in the three Government secondary colleges in Melton in 1991) undertook a commitment to an on-going curriculum development process.

## Project Outline

The central intention of the project was to develop a curriculum approach based on local 'research and action' initiatives by the students.

An early summary document described this as: "... identification and study of locally relevant issues; curriculum-based research into issues (as outlined in the Australian Studies course design); development and public presentation of action or proposals for action on the issues; a belief that students can provide valuable views, proposals and initiatives that will help solve important problems..."

The four classes commenced this approach to the Australian Studies course at the start of 1991, working both in their own separate classes and in coordination through student and teacher events.

There were several significant aspects to the course:

### *Class teaching about issues of youth homelessness:*

Teachers (and sometimes students) collected and developed appropriate study materials; speakers were invited into classes to lead discussions; videos were shown; small local research exercises were planned and carried out.

### *Student forum days:*

Several forum days were planned for the year, in which students from the four classes would come together to gain and share ideas, inspiration and information, and to plan their projects and present their results.

The first day was held in late February. This introduced the project, raised concerns about youth homelessness in the area (its extent, causes and consequences), and initiated student discussion of local issues that were important to young people in Melton. Students suggested

ways that these could be taken up for research and action within the course.

The second student forum day was held (after several delays) in early July. This focused on the topic of a 'fair and reasonable' society, and involved ten community agencies who offered workshops on the relation of their work to the issues students had identified. The discussions enabled students to plan their research more precisely, to gain important information and to make contact with a wider range of community people.

A third student forum was held late in the year as a 'presentation day' and more details of this are given below.

### *Major research projects:*

The core of the course was the completion of a series of major research projects. Students were supported in defining and carrying out research into local issues that contribute to, are associated with or are outcomes of youth homelessness. The four classes became, in fact, a large coordinated student research team around local issues that were seen by young people and the community as being of vital importance.

It was also important that this was 'real research'. It differed from much other student 'research' or project work in that it was:

- \* **locally** rather than broadly based;
- \* **primary** research rather than secondary or 'library' research;
- \* linked to **action** or proposals for action, rather than for its own sake;
- \* intended for a **community audience** beyond the classroom.

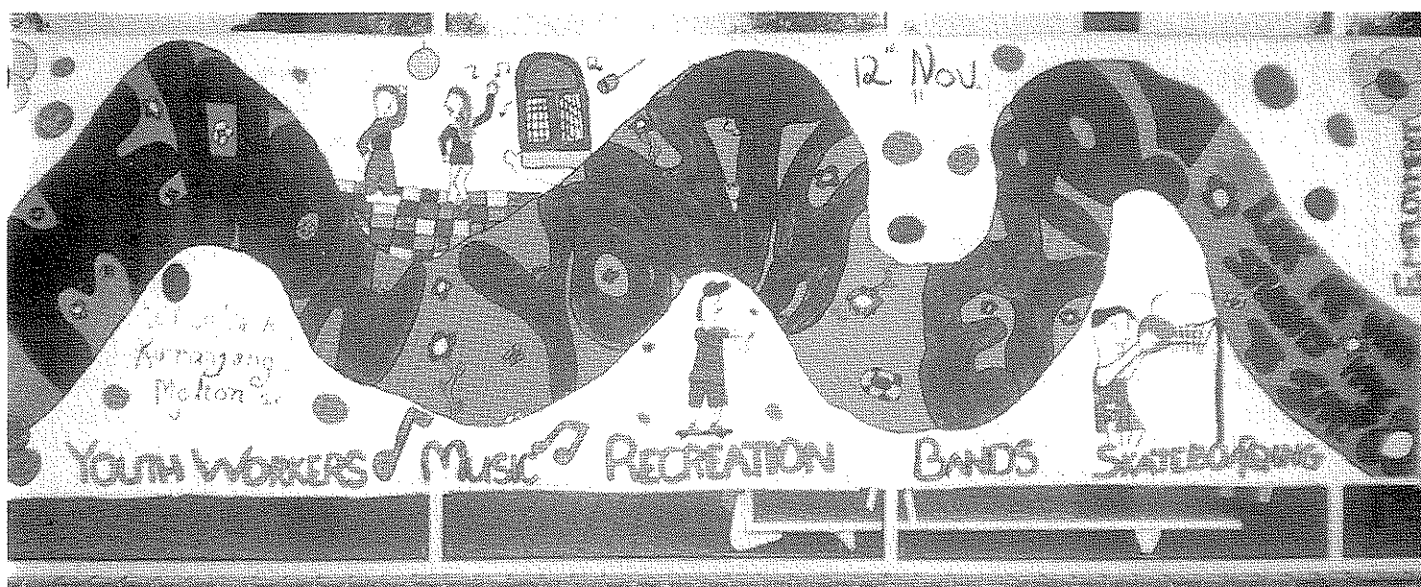
Some of the topics chosen, developed and researched by the students were:

'Youth Services in Melton'  
'Education and Training in the West'  
'Relationships Between the Youth of  
Melton and Melton Police'  
'Domestic Violence'  
'Local Views on Youth Homelessness in  
Victoria'  
'Alcohol and Drug Abuse'  
'Places to Go for Teenagers'  
'Youth Homelessness and Unemployment  
Linkages'

and so on. In all, 24 research reports were written on such issues.

### *A Student-run Presentation Forum:*

The third Student Forum occurred in mid-November, and was organised by a team of students from the four classes, supported by the



teachers and project consultants. It took the form of a Youth Expo at which the students presented their research results. Invitations were sent to local and state groups and individuals with an interest in youth homelessness, and an audience of approximately 50 visitors arrived to receive, consider and respond to the research findings.

Students presented written reports, leaflets, posters, graphs, displays, talks, videotapes, audio-tapes and drama sketches.

It was an exciting day, from the moment the huge advertising banner was raised outside the Civic Centre. Students were listened to, asked to justify their conclusions, argued with, challenged and supported.

*Publication of a book of the student research reports:*

Extracts from the students' research reports have been published as a book: **Educating Others; Educating Ourselves.**

The decision to publish this book grew from students' suggestions about possibilities for extending and publicising their research outcomes: "some should be published; some of the other issues could be proposed to the Council for action to be taken.... these presentations should be looked at by people such as the police and government..."

The book does more than this: as well as providing a clear example of the students' research outcomes and proposals for their community, it also shows the processes involved in this project and what is possible within the Australian Studies course - and similarly in many other courses.

In addition to these student-based aspects of the project, continuing support was also provided to the teachers involved. The group met fortnightly throughout the year to plan, coordinate and share information. In addition, areas of in-service need were identified and seminars organised - not just for these teachers, but for other teachers of Australian Studies from these schools.

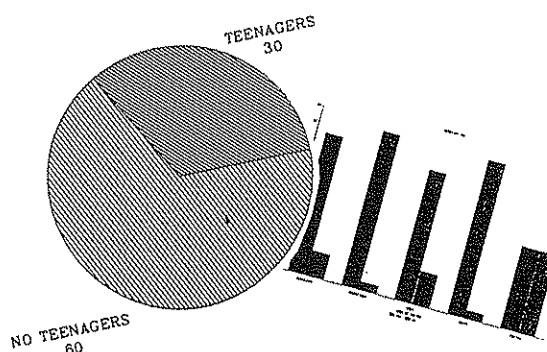
## Project Outcomes and Lessons

There have been many important outcomes from this project. It has illustrated how community issues can be raised for consideration by schools and how schools and community agencies can work in partnership to incorporate these issues in the curriculum. It has provided a model of curriculum development within a district, with inter-school cooperation between both teachers and students.

Most importantly, it has provided a concrete example (illustrating the academic and social benefits) of students tackling critical issues:

- \* which are real, relevant and important to them and to their community;
- \* in which they are given responsibility for organisation and research;
- \* where their results and views are listened to and treated seriously;
- \* where there are 'real' outcomes and 'real' audiences for their work, beyond the classroom and the teacher; and
- \* in which research can be linked to achievable action outcomes.

The project continues to develop in 1992. Further support has been provided by the Students at Risk Program and through the Youth Homelessness Taskforce, to convey the results from 1991 to other teachers and to extend the approaches to other areas of the schools.



# "A PURPOSEFUL COMMITMENT WITH AN ACHIEVABLE END"

## One of the Teachers Reflects

Looking back over the year, I would say this project has been interesting and worthwhile.

I have chosen these two terms because, firstly, as a teacher involved in the process, it was a purposeful commitment with an achievable (but open) end.

Secondly, this group of students has had the opportunity to look at areas and issues they may never have looked at in a critical way, then to think about (for example) their usefulness, effectiveness, suitability, accessibility etc. I can quite confidently say that my students know **something** about young people and the community in which they live.

### Major Project

I was pleasantly surprised at the research the students were able to generate on the local community, and also at some of the topic areas they chose to tackle.

Early in the year, I didn't think much was going to happen, because this type of research does require effort and initiative. (Research and action approaches had not been attempted by these students before.)

However I feel the low key but consistent comments and enquiries in class about young people, local events, attitudes students have about Melton/youth/school/friends, opportunities, homelessness, unemployment and so on, raised some interest in the areas that I hoped the class would follow through for the year.

I found that the more I spoke about local issues and young people, the more responsive the students became. For example, at the beginning of the year, I would refer to articles I'd seen in the local

papers or programs on TV. As the year went on, it was not uncommon for students to say, "Miss, did you see ..." or "Did you read ..." This would generate class discussion and I was often surprised at how much so many of them were willing to contribute. It was also encouraging to see that they were willing to look and listen, and bring their ideas, knowledge and opinions into the classroom without my prompting.

Whilst much of it may have been basic and often personal information, they were showing interest and enthusiasm about the issues raised, whether it be Peter Garrett's views on the growing number of homeless kids, or the location of McPherson Park or information for friends and acquaintances in difficult situations.

Getting started on the major project was difficult for all of us. Choosing topics, outlining strategies for gathering information, working cooperatively ... Fortunately, most of my students chose to follow the youth/local issues/ homelessness areas. However, I did find it difficult to give students as much direction, guidance, information etc as I would have liked. This is because I'm not really an expert in action/research.

Roger's sessions with my students were invaluable. The direction he was able to give them set many of them on track and I was able to assist them from there.

I have certainly learned a great deal about research and I will feel much more confident tackling major projects in 1992.

### Forum Days

I enjoyed the Forum Days. In fact, I would say that being able to inform students about the Forum Days through the year, gave the project weight and validity. It made

it 'big time' stuff and got the kids out of school and gave them something to remember and some information to draw on. To a certain extent, this is reflected in the students' course comment sheets.

Combining the three schools was a fabulous idea. But I believe that for this to be a truly effective means of encouraging students to work together, there **must** be more of them **early** in the year so students have the opportunity to establish ties with the other students. (An organisational nightmare?)

Countless times in class, we referred to people and issues that came out of the forum days.

Perhaps we could have publicised these events to the younger students (year 10s?) to encourage them in their Australian Studies work in the future.

### Presentation

The Presentation Forum was a great experience for many of my students, and I really enjoyed it too. Most of my students chose to have their major project and presentation on the same topic. This kept the stress level down (for all of us!) and they came up with what I think was some really interesting stuff.

I can honestly say that they are all knowledgeable about their chosen topics after this experience.

Three weeks prior to the Presentation Forum, I was (quietly) doubtful about its success. However I was, once again, pleasantly surprised and felt that the year's work was indeed justified by this end.

*Sharon Hillier  
Melton Secondary College*



## Reports

A substantial report of the whole project will be available in the near future (watch *Connect* for further details) and the compilation of student research reports is already available.

Copies of **Educating Others; Educating Ourselves** are being marketed and distributed by Melton Secondary College students through their Small Business Management Group. Contact:

**Margaret D'Cruze**  
Small Business Management Group  
Melton Secondary College  
Coburns Road, Melton 3337

Copies are \$10 plus \$2 postage.

This book is being formally launched in March 1992. It will ensure that the work of these students is not forgotten.

Has the project had a direct impact on youth homelessness in Melton? We may never know. We do know that these students have learnt about many of the reasons for homelessness and know much more about community support provisions and to whom to turn. Many have shown an understanding of and commitment to follow through issues in their community - to have their say, to demand to be taken seriously, to make a difference.

"When young people see something happen," wrote one student, "they feel more motivated and involved."

*Roger Holdsworth*

*Roger Holdsworth was employed as a participant/observer to support and document the Melton Australian Studies Curriculum Development Project in 1991 with a grant from the Office of Youth Affairs through the Melton Youth Homelessness Taskforce.*

# VICTORIAN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION GRANTS

The Victorian Environmental Education Council (VEEC) has announced the 1992 round of its Environmental Education Grants Program. The VEEC will allocate up to \$100,000 to schools and community organisations to support environmental education projects. This follows an outstanding response to the 1990 and 1991 rounds where many high quality applications were received and 184 grants were made.

Greening Australia (Victoria) Inc will participate in this year's grants program, boosting the funds available by a further \$30,000.

The grants are an important means for achieving wide community involvement in practical environmental education projects. Environmental education is vital to ensure that current high levels of environmental concern are matched by effective action on environmental problems.

The grants provide an important boost for schools and community groups which have already started environmental projects, and encourage others to start projects. Projects funded in previous rounds cover a wide range of educational styles and environmental issues, and are an important source of ideas and inspiration for others.

The active participation of students in development and implementation of environmental strategies within schools and within communities has frequently been an important aspect of successful proposals.

Some of the 184 projects which received grants in previous years include:

- \* A 'whole environment' program by Mt Eliza Primary School, which includes a reduce/reuse/recycle approach, revegetation projects, beach and park clean-ups and pollution monitoring;
- \* Incorporation by Derrinalum Secondary College of an environmental component in new VCE courses and use of a local environmental issue as a theme to help integrate a range of VCE study areas;
- \* An inspiring guide to environmental careers produced by students and staff of St Margaret's School, Berwick;
- \* A training scheme by the Girl Guides Association for 15-18 year old guides to become leaders for environmental education programs for 11-12 year old guides.

The closing date for applications for 1992 round grants is March 27th. Details and application forms can be obtained from the VEEC Secretariat on (03) 628 2703.



# YPiN

## YOUNG PEOPLE IN NEED



We are Karen, Denise, Andrew and Cheryl. We have been employed by Young People In Need to do peer education on family violence for groups of young people. We were initially funded for a pilot project through Attorney-General's Department with the support of the State Government's Family Violence Prevention Committee. Now with a one-off grant from Community Services Victoria, we will be continuing next year.

We started our work by being trained on the issue by our Co-Ordinator Jenny Allen for 6 weeks. During that training period we researched materials on family violence and were assisted by agencies such as the Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre. We have created a workshop which is activity based and designed so all young people participate, not only victims/survivors of family violence. Our workshops aim to make young men as well as young women informed and able to take action on family violence and its causes.

We decided to do it in a fun, interesting way and in a relaxed atmosphere. This means we can get young people talking about an issue (which is usually kept behind closed doors) in a way that no-one feels intimidated. In the workshops, we look at the myths about family violence, how family violence is about abuse of power, and we draw out action that young people can take to stop the violence.

As young people ourselves, we feel that peer education is a

great idea. We would like to see it used more often. It is all about young people teaching other young people about issues that affect them in a way they understand (with no jargon). Therefore they can pass it on to their peers so information doesn't just stop with the workshop.

We believe this is a positive way of spreading information. Seeing an example of information being put across by young people makes people who come to the group more confident about passing it on themselves.

We have done a number of workshops now, both for young women's groups and mixed groups, e.g. youth refuges,

community health centres, schools. We have received a really good response and are now also giving talks about how peer education works. Our project shows that young people can be trusted to pass on information about issues that affect them. That is empowerment.

It takes a lot of time effort and commitment to start a peer education project. But if young people feel more comfortable getting their information from their peers (and they often do) then why not go for it.

If you would like more information about our Project, or for us to do a workshop, or to give a talk on peer education, then call us on 696 1325.

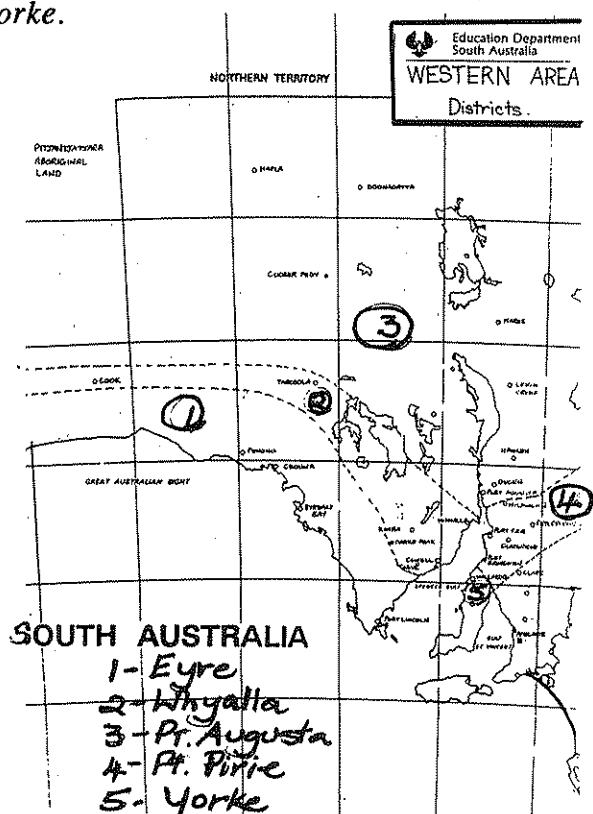
Reprinted from **Youth Issues Forum**, Summer 1991-92; Youth Affairs Council of Victoria.



# STUDENT TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT DAYS

## WESTERN AREA, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The Western Area of the Education Department of South Australia covers an area of 85% of the state. The distance between the two farthest schools is 2500 km. In that Area, there are six School Districts: Aboriginal/Anangu, Eyre, Port Augusta, Port Pirie, Whyalla and Yorke.



On 26th, 27th and 28th October 1991, 45 secondary students from schools in the Western Area came together at Bowman Park, just outside of the town of Crystal Brook in the mid-north of South Australia for a most successful training camp.

The program provided over the three days further developed students' knowledge and skills about the operation of Student Representative Councils and how they fit into the larger picture of student governance, through association with the Western Area Council of Students (WACOS) and with the State Council of Students (SCoS).

WACOS executive members Rachel Proud (Wudinna), Brenton Caffin (Risdon Park), Shannon Doyle (Port Pirie), George Hyde and Brett O'Donoghue (Port Lincoln) played an important part in the program by leading groups, introducing workshops and generally displaying confidence and leadership throughout the camp.

Workshops were held in:

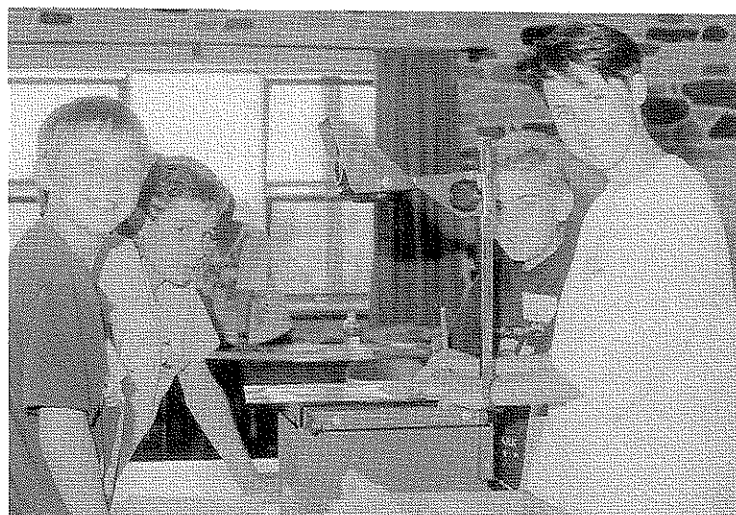
- \* problem-solving;
- \* how the Education Department works;
- \* SRC - roles and responsibilities;
- \* the importance of networks;
- \* group dynamics; and
- \* communication and cooperation.

Guest speakers included Dr Marelle Harisun (Acting Director of Western Area), Peter Phillips (Principal of Risdon Park High) and Phil Read (PASS Consultant, Eastern Area).

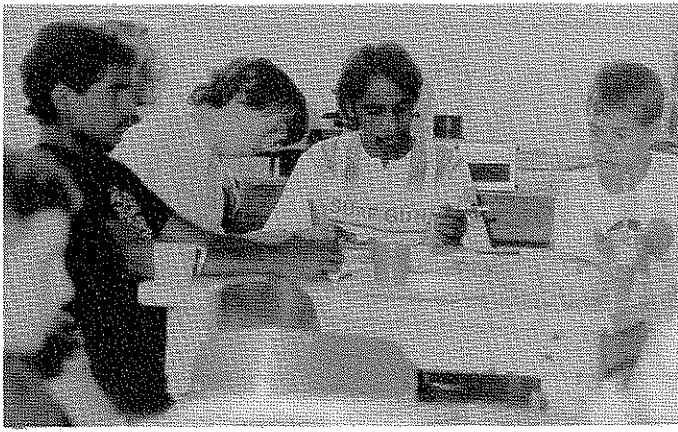
Peter Phillips challenged students to get rid of stereotypes of principals, and think about many issues such as: what do you think of the principal as a person? He suggested they ask questions of the school and find out where decisions are made at their schools. He believes that SRCs can be a powerful force in achieving their goals if these goals are turned into plans.

A session with Di Russell, Senior Education Officer in Western Area, looked at where students fit into the new Education Department structure which comes into operation in 1992.

The constitution of WACOS was amended to include an enlarged Management Group, with representatives from each district. Students are now back in their School Districts and intend to revitalise the Student District Networks in 1992.



Rachel Proud (right), Covenor of WACOS, 1991



*Jason Fry and Peter Mungoo, Port Augusta Special Learning Centre; this was the first time Aboriginal students had attended the WACOS camp.*

## PRIMARY STUDENT TRAINING DAYS IN WESTERN AREA

Several schools linked together to provide training in term 4, 1991, for students from years R-7. On Yorke Peninsula, Carramulka teamed with Port Victoria, and Port Vincent teamed with Stansbury to provide training in meeting procedures, assertive behaviour and listening skills. In small groups, students role-played SRC meetings and class meetings. Ways of taking minutes and practice at moving motions proved popular with students. Planning for 1992 was also undertaken, with all students being able to have their say.

At Minlaton, year 6s reviewed their class meeting procedure and role-played a class meeting after watching the video *Seen and Heard*. They also began thinking about what it will mean to be part of a larger SRC in their new community school next year.

In November, 55 students from Crystal Brook, Port Germain, Port Pirie West, Napperby, Airdale Primary, Risdon Park and Solomontown primary schools gathered at Port Pirie for a challenging training day. Teachers from each of the schools participated in the day, together with some parents.

The morning sessions included "What do we mean by student participation?" and schools looked at what was happening in their schools under the headings of:

- \* what we do well
- \* what could be improved
- \* what we'd like to do

*Port Pirie Primary School Training Day,  
November 1991*

Planning for how this could happen was begun at the camp, and each district went home with an action plan to begin District Networks. The Whyalla District managed to get out a newsletter to its schools before the end of the 1991 school year. Congratulations Whyalla District!

Students looked at ways in which they could report back to their schools after the camp. Some of the suggestions were:

- \* ask for time at SRC;
- \* ask for time at Assembly;
- \* posters around the school;
- \* go and see the principal;
- \* speak at a staff meeting;
- \* speak at a School Council meeting;
- \* speak to a parent group;
- \* report in school newsletter.

The learning took place in an atmosphere of fun and friendliness, and the Red Faces night on Saturday also proved there is hidden talent in many schools.

Some comments from those attending: "I certainly have learned a lot, especially about communicating with other people." "It was heaps of fun and you seem to learn more when it's fun."

Many suggested that the camp would be more valuable to students if held earlier in the year. Let's hope that may happen in 1992!



The Parliamentary Pack video on meeting procedure was shown and as a whole group students listed the elements needed for a good meeting. Then in mixed school groups, students role-played a meeting, discussing an issue of their choice in general business, and reporting back to the whole group afterwards. In the afternoon, Western Area consultants worked with teachers to lead workshops of mixed school groups in conflict resolution, negotiation, problem solving, assertive behaviour (girls only) and group and listening skills.

The day was broken down into sessions with small groups and then sharing back to the large group. This gave students the opportunity to practise using a microphone and speaking before a larger group than most had before. Comments on how the day went included one from a teacher who said: "I can't get over how much confidence the girls have gained in just one day!"

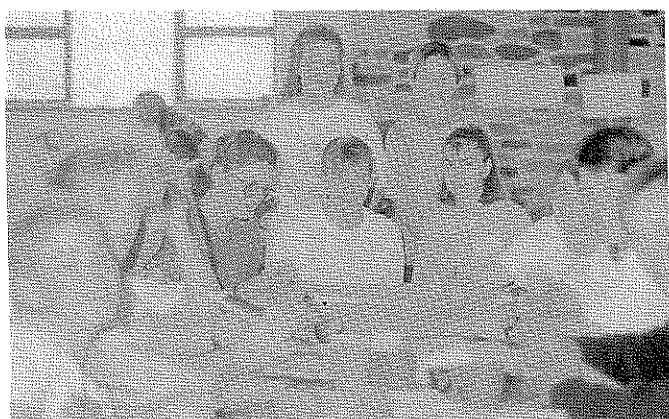
### PORT LINCOLN TRAINING DAY

This day-long workshop for 40 students in year 7 (chosen by their classes to represent them) focused on communication skills, decision making, different meeting styles, and what makes a good meeting. Teachers and consultants worked together, and students were engaged in whole group and small group activities throughout the day. The combination of talk and doing again proved very successful, and the surroundings of the local yacht club helped impress on the students the importance the school placed on student participation.

The scene has been set for successful student training and development, and teachers taking part in these training days are already helping to set up other such days for other schools within the area. With Area support, student participation looks set to improve even further in 1992.



*Students from Port Augusta District at WACOS Camp*



*Whyalla District Students at WACOS Camp*

*Ms Gerry Ulstrup  
Parent and Student Participation Consultant, 1991  
Western Area, SA*

## JUNIOR SCHOOL COUNCILS: REGISTER OF JSCs

Would you like to have access to other primary schools with Junior School Councils?  
Someone with whom to have contact and to share ideas? A way of giving your  
Junior School Council some legitimacy outside your own schools?

Why not let us include your schools in a Register of Victorian (initially) Junior School Councils. The whole Register will eventually be published in *Connect* magazine.

Just send us the name of your school and the name of a contact person (teacher or JSC secretary perhaps). We will contact you for further details. Write to:

David and Mary Petherick  
C/o *Connect*, 12 Brooke Street, Northcote VIC 3070



Parliamentary secretary Richard Bull with school representatives who voted to set up a State school representative council.

# Students vote for State Representative Council

**M**ore than 100 students across the State are pressing the Department of School Education to approve the formation of a State student organisation.

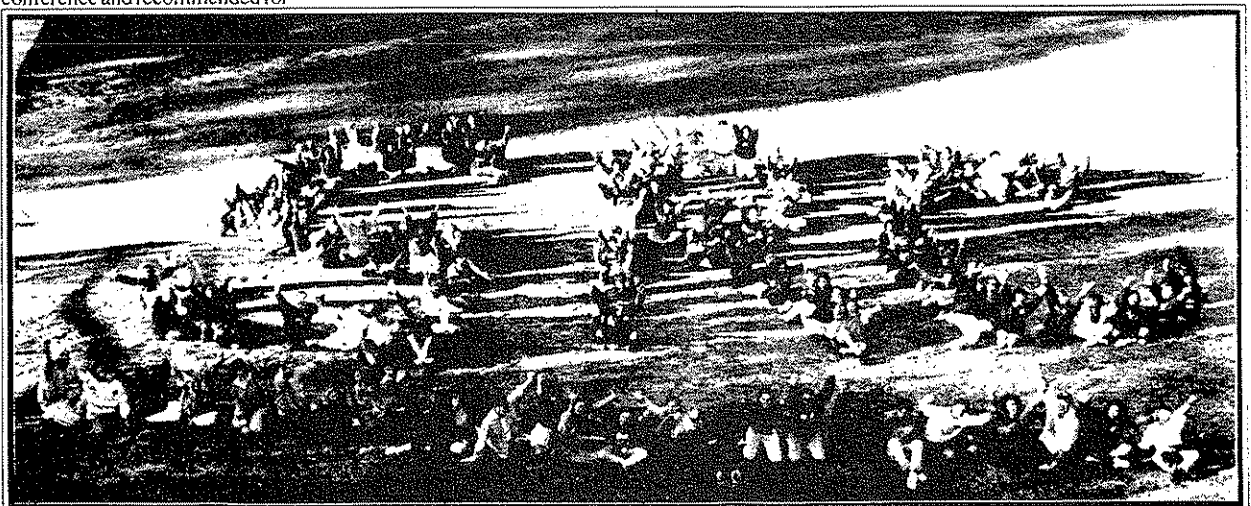
*By Judy Wilkinson*

At the recent 1991 Student Representative Council (SRC) State Conference, held at Vision Valley, students earmarked 14 recommendations for the Director-General's approval. Dr Sharpe is expected to look at the recommendations this week. SRC conference organisers Sue Crook and Boronia Foley said the idea of a State student council was discussed at last year's conference and recommended for

further talks this year. "The students debated during the week-long conference as to whether a State body was needed," Ms Crook said. "From the debate the issue was put to an open forum before students went into workshop sessions to look at the purpose and function of a State council," Ms Crook said. "It was then put to a general vote and although it was not unanimous most of the students wanted to form a State structure." Ms Crook said country students had been concerned whether a State structure would truly represent them. She said the students filled out a questionnaire which proposed

possible structures for a State council. Ms Crook said one student from each Region was represented on the sub-committee which put forward recommendations based on the questionnaire. She said the recommendations were put to the students on the last day of the conference. The main purpose of a State SRC would be a forum of discussion by students as currently there was no formal way of getting input from students on issues effecting them. Ms Crook said the recommendations included a request for the Department to financially back a State organisation which related to

SRCs. The body would be known as the NSW Student Representative Council and its aim would be to provide effective communication and liaison between students at all levels and Departmental and Government officers. Should the Director-General approve the formation of the NSW SRC, Ms Crook said a steering committee would be formed to draft a Constitution. While Ms Crook was confident the Director-General would look favourably on the recommendations, Director, Regional Co-ordination Hetty Cislowski said Dr Sharpe was 'very enthusiastic' about the proposal.



*Reprinted from School Education News, Vol 1 No 10, 4 September 1991, NSW Department of School Education.*



## Project-Centered Teaching: A Tool for the Democratic Classroom

by George H. Wood

**“W**hy do we have to know this?” “Will this be on the test?” “Can we just answer the odd-numbered questions this time?”

How many times this year will teachers hear these or similar questions? Too often, more than likely, because many children see little connection between what they learn in school and the world around them. So we are left with threats (“if you don’t learn this, you’ll fail the test”) or promises (“you’ll need this when you’re in college”) to motivate students.

The alternative to this struggle is to find ways to make content come alive. To insure that students see what they are doing as being important in and of itself. And, further, to find ways to bring each child into active engagement with classroom activities. This is what teaching for democracy is fundamentally about—giving every student the ability to make a difference in the world. One tool for doing that is project-centered (often called project-based) teaching.

### A Definition

A classroom of first graders in Knox County, Kentucky writes, performs and critiques their own weekly radio show. Fourth graders in an Ohio school schedule a yearly rocket launch, sending their own creations racing for the sky. High school students in suburban Chicago design, build and maintain a nature study area on the school grounds. You might be surprised to know that the objectives in these classes are to teach language arts, physics and composition respectively.

What each of these classrooms have in common is a teacher who covers content through students actively doing something. That is, simply put, what project-centered teaching is all about; actively engaging students in creating something for a real audience (someone beyond the teacher) through which content can be covered.

But perhaps the best way to define a project-centered approach is through listening to teachers describe it. In the accompanying box you’ll find a set of descriptors that capture the essence of project-centered teaching. These were gathered at a meeting of teachers engaged in project-centered teaching with students from pre-school to college graduate level courses. As you can see, it all came back to answering the “why do we have to know this” question—because it helps us reach our goal.

### Getting Started, Moving On

As noted, a project-centered approach to teaching can be utilized with learners at any grade level and with any subject matter. The project doesn’t have to be elaborate (though it will probably grow) and it can be tailored to any content area (in fact, it usually covers several). So what are the first steps? How does one go about organizing and carrying out a project-centered approach to teaching?

According to teachers who have had success with project-centered teaching the first step is the most crucial—choosing the project. Here are several tips they offer in getting started:

1. Brainstorm. Ask the class, and yourself, how could we use what we are learning. Get a wide variety of choices up on the board and then let the kids choose.

2. Student choice is central—the project has to be theirs’ in order to have real motivating power.

3. Choose just one project. It will take all of your energy (at first, at least) to direct and complete one project. Don’t try and handle two or three.

4. Make sure the project is interesting to you as well. You’ll have to maintain interest throughout the process.

5. Make sure it also meets kids’ needs. Can you see in it where you will be able to push students, where you can help them grow?

6. And, of course, there is nothing wrong with seeding a project. Dropping a few subtle hints or ideas is not against the rules.

Having gathered ideas and come up with a few of the best, how does the class make a final decision? A set of criteria might include making sure the resources are (or can be) available to complete the project, that there is a genuine audience for whatever you produce and that what is chosen is very concrete and doable. The key here is insuring a reasonable chance of success, which will breed

in students the desire to take on additional and perhaps larger projects.

So what might your class project look like? Who knows? The range of possibilities is as diverse as the classrooms that take the challenge to do something real (see accompanying box). The point however is not the *product*, it is the *process*.

Class Projects:  
A Baker's Dozen

- A book about how we use math in everyday life.
- A photo/text book about favorite activities.
- A play area that is constantly being transformed from a haunted house, to a fire station, to a restaurant, to a ???
- A recycling drive.
- A book for younger children.
- A school/community improvement project.
- A local history book.
- A classwide science project on wildlife habitats.
- A flyer on the need for volunteer fire fighters, or recycling, or voting, or ???
- A concert or performance of local folk music.
- A survey of local water quality.
- A computer simulation.
- A student-written play or other performance.

This process begins, as we've seen, with students being involved in making a choice about what to do. After that decision it's time to find out what we already know and what we need to find out to complete the project. Too often we assume student ignorance, and spend time reteaching things young people already know. Alternatively, in a project-centered approach, teachers find out with the class what they know and what they need to learn in the process of doing the project. Of course, students are making the same discoveries and thus seeing why they need to learn more math, English, science, etc.

The next step is to jointly plan the project. Such things like time lines, resources, contact people, and all the rest can be worked out by the whole class. Cooperative learning teams can be set up to tackle various tasks and a system of reporting or checking in with each group can be set up to keep the project moving (see Bill Elasky's "Creating A Climate for Group Work" in *Democracy and Education*, Fall 1989).

As any project progresses mid-course changes are always to be expected. The audience for the work might change or grow, the format might move from a slide presentation to a video-tape, or the project might be abandoned in favor of a new, more promising avenue.

Throughout all this the teacher's job is three-fold. First, to ensure that every child is involved and that traditional barriers to participation such as gender, ability or race are overcome. This is one of the powerful things about project-centered teaching; it opens up avenues for every student to experience success due to the multiple ways of learning it offers. Second, to facilitate



the development of skills and the comprehension of content that fits both the project and the curriculum. Third, to push every student to take on new challenges in the context of the project and to go beyond what they thought they could do.

While content is not of primary concern to students, teachers are accountable for covering what is often called "the course of study." A project-centered approach utilizes content to achieve a higher goal, but often teachers are asked how they insure that students are learning. Obviously, a test is not the best measure of student achievement, as such instruments ignore the process in a project experience. Further, the project itself is best not graded. As one teacher put it, "The actual project is the end point. By the time (the kids) do the project we've covered the material in the process. And the kids really don't want a grade on it, they just do it for the doing." There are other reasons for not grading the final product, including the fact that a failed final product is not necessarily indicative of student effort or ability. But the bottom line is that the project itself is too valuable to be graded.

So how then can we generate a grade? (We speak of grades here not because we think they are useful tools for teachers, but because most teachers are required to give them.) Here are several ideas that teachers have shared with us:

1. Critique the planning. Every project requires a great deal of planning. Look back at that and evaluate how students went about their preparations.
2. Multiple evaluation points. One teacher pointed out that he gives between 5-12 grades on each project. They are given out on the basis of progress at set points—points which were often determined by the class.
3. Use student-generated goals. Most projects require sub-groups of the class. Each sub-group can generate its own set of goals and evaluate the students at each step of the way. But, one teacher who uses projects extensively cautions, "nothing is set in concrete."
4. Always make criteria public. Either through posting the objectives listed in the curriculum guide or the goals the class has selected, the standards to which students will be held must be public.
5. Make sure we see the work from a kids-eye view. Another way to put this is to insure that the project work is developmentally appropriate. When we work with kids

on projects we need to insure that we let kids work on it as they see fit. As a teacher put it, "We have to take away the adult notion of what counts." We can teach skills in a variety of contexts, but we teach them best in the contexts that count for kids.

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*One of the powerful things about project-centered teaching; it opens up avenues for every student to experience success....*

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The final word is that the proof is in the pudding. When students turn out a magazine article, or perform a play, or design and paint a mural then we can see what they have learned. More importantly we see that they can use what they've learned.

#### Project-centered Teaching and the Democratic Classroom

The ultimate goal of the democratic classroom is the preparation of young people who have the skill and courage to make a difference in their local and the global communities. As John Dewey pointed out, we learn these things through experience. We learn to take a stand by taking a stand, we learn to work for change by working for change. One way to provide such experiences in school is through the project-centered approach.

Of course, we've all been involved in so-called class projects that were not at all democratically empowering for students. Projects that the teacher chose, that were meant to teach just one skill, and that had no audience beyond the classroom. But the type of project-centered teaching described here is fundamentally different in multiple ways. And because of these differences, the experience for children and for the teacher, is qualitatively different.

To begin with, the project-centered approach liberates both teachers and students from the textbooks. It frees them up to choose, collaboratively, what they will work on, what they will learn. In this way they become life-long learners; people who know how to find out, who are their own experts, who realize that knowledge can indeed be power.

How to use that power—how to make a genuine difference in the world—is the second democratic virtue of project-centered teaching. When young people are allowed to act upon what they know, they learn how to make a difference. Indeed, what they find in a project-centered classroom is that they do not have to wait to use what they know, they can use it now. Or, as one teacher puts it, "I want my students to see that they can make a difference now, not in some far-off future."

But making a difference means taking risks, and therein lies yet another democratic virtue of project-centered teaching. Of the many things democracy requires of us, there may be nothing more important than the ability to take risks. Every citizen is called upon to venture into uncharted waters, to ask previously unheard questions, to solve problems for which there may be no one correct answer. In the project-centered classroom this is often the experience students encounter as they try something new, something they are the first to do. "It is," muses one teacher, "like being a pioneer, and you know you are on an adventure with every new beginning."

There is probably not much more required of citizens than that they be able to find out for themselves, know how and want to make a difference, and are willing to take risks. These are virtues that all democratic educators strive to instill in their students. One way of doing that is through a project-centered approach to teaching.

Hands-on, kids doing not just listening.  
It ends with a product, something real, for someone other than the teacher.  
Encompasses a number of objectives at once.  
Almost always working in groups—either actual group work or individuals working for a group goal.  
It's evolutionary; it may change its focus, direction or product as the work goes on.  
The work belongs to the kids; it's what they want to do.  
It involves a lot of student interaction.  
The work has a purpose.  
The work is real—it comes from the world around the school, not the textbook.  
It isn't an assignment; the kids are involved in decision-making all the way through.  
It isn't fragmented; the process is viewed as a unified whole.  
Kids get a sense of fulfillment, a sense that, "Hey, I did this."  
Kids produce something that they often want to look at after they are finished with it.  
Kids are involved in the evaluation of the project.  
It frees the teacher up to really go after content and understanding.  
It frees the teacher up to work with individuals as well as groups.  
The teacher is pushed to the limit.  
It makes use of community resources.

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(Institute for Democracy in Education, College of Education, 119 McCracken Hall, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio 45701-2979, USA) Vol 6 No 1, Fall 1991.*



VICTORIAN ENVIRONMENTAL  
EDUCATION COUNCIL

### ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION GRANTS ROUND 3

#### ELIGIBILITY

Community organisations and schools.

#### DEADLINE

March 27th, 1992

DETAILS FROM: VEEC Secretariat  
PH: (03) 628 2703

*George H. Wood is the coordinator of the Institute for Democracy in Education.*

# Teacher or Learner?

## The Foxfire Approach Is Not a "Project"

Karen Adkins  
St. Francis Elementary  
Pikeville, Kentucky

Being a first-year teacher is an experience in itself, but if you add to that a few other factors, such as teaching in a Catholic private school when you're not Catholic, being enrolled in the Intern Program to obtain Kentucky certification, taking Master's classes at night, and teaching a fifth/sixth grade-split class, then you'd have my first year's experience. In fact, I'm not sure "experience" is an adequate word to describe it.

I got my undergraduate degree at Pikeville College in the Spring of '88. During that four year period, I had been working as a Headstart teacher. I thought I had a good base of general knowledge about teaching to begin with, but I don't think anything could have prepared me for this first year.

To begin with, our Pike County School System was having financial problems. During the summer, while I was in the midst of trying to secure a job, the state took over our system. Hiring was frozen, of course, and teaching jobs were non-existent. My biggest problem at that point was landing some sort of teaching position.

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*"Will this work for me, or  
will I fall flat on my face?"*

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Meanwhile, I had been given the opportunity to take a two-week Foxfire course at Berea College. I was excited about going because I had met Eliot Wigginton and one of his students at an Appalachian Literature workshop a year earlier. The student, Laura Lee, had told us about a book her class was working on with a local author, James Still. I thought the project was fantastic. It made me curious and eager to hear how a teacher had used hands-on activities.

I went to Berea wondering about what the Foxfire method was and how it worked. I came away with that knowledge, but that just took me to a higher plane where there were more questions. Now I was wondering, "Do I dare try this method in my classroom, in my first year?" And "Will this work for me, or will I fall flat on my face?"

My life was one big question, and all these other questions just seemed to complicate it.

When I got the job of teaching fourteen fifth- and sixth-grade high achievers, I was thrilled but worried, so I decided right then I would shelve the hands-on experience idea and just try to survive the year. The amount of preparation needed to teach two levels of every subject was (and still is) overwhelming. Trying to defer payment on my undergraduate student loans, I foolishly signed up for Master's classes that required night attendance. I had my hands full, but reflection upon that time has shown me that people will do crazy things when they finally believe in something.

Thinking back, I can't remember my reasoning, but the way the year began was very simple. I recall that I had decided to teach with textbooks in a strictly traditional manner, but a discovery I had made in the summer kept bugging me. The insight was the idea that hands-on experience could be used to teach any material and did not

necessarily have to develop into a "project." My belief in this has been the sole reason for everything we've done this year.

All teachers want their students to learn critical thinking and group skills, so I had no problem convincing myself that it would be "traditional" to teach my students brainstorming and group processes. The first time I led my students through the process of group brainstorming and planning, it was very successful, and that was all I needed to get me going. It was so simple I couldn't believe it.

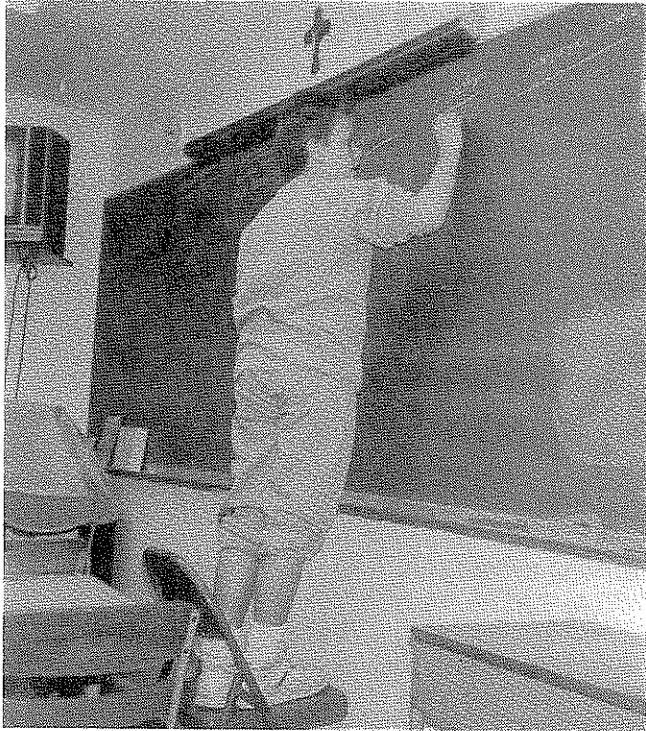
Before we began, we discussed the idea that I expected them to think on their own this year. I also told them that part of the time our classroom was going to be run like a democracy where the majority ruled. In the session, the question I posed to them was: "Do you want me to tell you what we are going to do each day for morning exercises, or would you rather design your own?" I'm sure you know what their answer was. That point was the actual beginning of my year with hands-on experience in my classroom.

Morning exercises are the opening activities usually done in St. Francis classrooms for the first ten or fifteen minutes of our school day. They often consist of the pledge, a song, and a prayer because St. Francis is a private religious school. The students planned four sections of activities which they would change when they grew tired of them: e.g., patriotic, fun, current events, and music. One student was responsible for each piece.

When I changed the clips on the job chart each day, students would call out what they wanted. That way everyone knew what activity each was responsible for the



*Karen Adkins' writers, fundraisers, and decision makers.*



*John Lynch records stories under categories as the class is deciding how their book is to be set up in sections.*

next morning. Presenting them with ten minutes of their own was exciting to them, since the nuns had always controlled everything. To succeed in those ten minutes, my students had to learn every process they needed to make "hands-on" work in our classroom. Those ten minutes were the key to our successful year.

I figured all this would fizzle out in a very short time, but I was wrong. Most students remembered their turn and prepared something for each day. The activities became more and more complicated and sometimes showed a great amount of creativity. The skills they have been learning from planning and carrying out these exercises are too numerous to elaborate on.

I don't want to leave anyone with the impression that there have never been any problems with doing the morning exercises this way. Kids will be kids, so the major problem I have had is holding them to the time limit. Sometimes students will forget their activity. I have to help the class control the kind of peer pressure they use on the forgetters. They also have had problems with liking a new exercise and getting into a rut with it by using it several days in a row. Usually, all I have to do to correct the problems is remind them of the purpose in allowing them to plan this time. Then the problems always seem to resolve themselves.

I realize now that if you teach your students how democracy works in a classroom, then you'd better be ready to go on with them, because there's no turning back. They learned very quickly to make good use of their control of that first ten minutes and the next thing I knew, we were having a class election complete with posters, campaign speeches, vote-buying and bribery. The four officers began to meet every morning and plan a newspaper the class had been bugging me to do.

I never realized how much the students had internalized the idea of group decision making and planning. Until the morning of the revolt! That morning, the officers announced in morning exercises that they had decided that we would have a newspaper. The students were all excited and stayed that way even as they were being told what job they would have. I was sitting there, listening in

shock, when the class realized what was going on. One of my quietest students spoke up, "Just who put you all in charge, anyway?" Needless to say, the classroom was in an uproar, and the rest of the day was shot as most were mad at each other and several stayed in the bathroom crying.

I was so amazed at what had taken place that I forgot my original intention about traditional teaching and started on a long learning journey, with my students in the lead. This was the beginning of their newspaper, *Growing Images*. After the revolt, we backed up and started over. Many brainstorming sessions finally produced a basic plan to operate on. We did many varied activities to learn about newspapers and the process used to produce them. All activities were suggested or designed by the students, and I had no problem keeping them on track. Motivation was built right in, and they knew exactly what they wanted to achieve.

We worked for approximately six weeks before we were ready to print. All had contributed to the paper in some way, and we had worked on revising the articles until they were almost error-free. The group voted to type the articles themselves, and this was where problems came up: fifth- and sixth-grade students are terrible typists. The error-free articles were no more.

When we got ready to do our cut-and-paste layout, they brought in their "typed" articles and this is where I panicked. I was so worried about what the parents would say about the errors that I wrote a cover article that explained how the newspaper had been put together. I felt this let me off the hook, so we printed our paper. We printed fifty papers on our copy machine, and the children collated them. They sold out immediately. The papers were a big hit and were being read and discussed at dinner tables, with grandparents, and even over long-distance phone calls made to relatives. The students came back to the classroom talking about these things, and it sounded as though someone had taught the parents the method of critique that we used in the classroom. They were saying things like, "I like the way the paper was designed. Where did Erin get her ideas for the Kids Korner?" Erin had put in some recipes, and some parents even tried them.

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### *The students had internalized the idea of group decision making and planning.*

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We never heard a negative comment from anyone, and this experience gave them and me the confidence that we needed to try anything.

In reading this, you may be concluding that the students ruled my classroom and that it was in chaos most of the time. That was far from the truth. The newspaper project covered English. All my other subjects were taught by using our textbooks, going page by page.

After the paper was printed, we debated doing another issue, but since the majority was undecided, we got into a different English project. It was Halloween, and they had been using the writing process to write two stories. Because they seemed to be tiring of it, I spent a weekend racking my brain trying to think of a creative way to get them to write again.

What I did on Monday was not much. I had them brainstorm safety rules for Trick-or-Treating. They came up with seven. I then set down these criteria for them to go by: (1) Whatever they chose to do to present these rules had to produce something written; and (2) it had to be done as a class.

By the end of the fifty-five minute session, it had been decided that we would do a play. Each Trick-or-Treating rule would be presented in a separate skit, and teams had been chosen to do each skit. We also chose a day to perform, the next Wednesday. We were ready to roll.

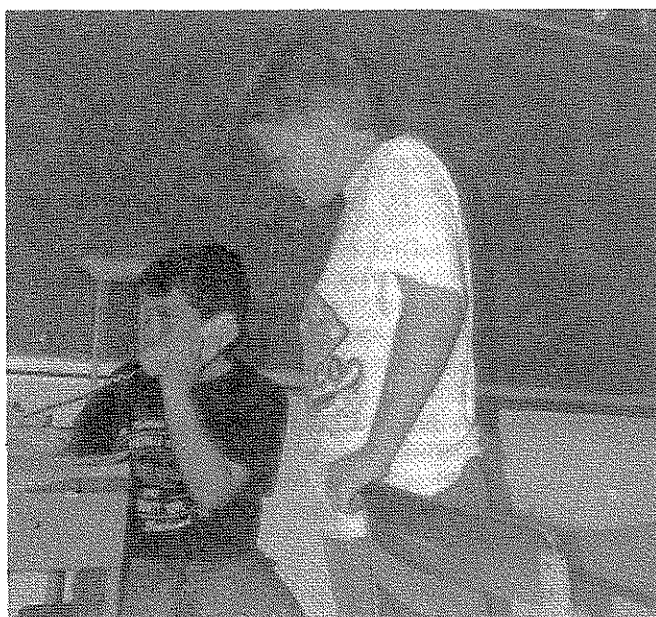
What happened in the next six forty-five-minute English periods astounded me. My class worked together like a well-oiled machine, and I just sat back in amazement and watched. The only background information that I provided was the elements of a play. Tuesday, they began to write their scripts. Wednesday, some of the groups completed their writing, and I thought I had died and gone to someplace pleasant when they began to perform their skits and ask others to critique them. They made revisions according to student responses, and when they were ready, which was Monday, we had our first rehearsal. They again worked together as a group and decided exactly how the play would be performed in our cafeteria.

Wednesday, we were ready to go. The play was put on for the other students in our school. It was complete with an introduction, skits with costumes and scenery, and a rap-song summary. All I did was videotape it. This seemed to be the highest point we had reached in the group learning process. Remembrance of it still produces a warm glow inside me.

I wish I could say we went on doing activities like those previously described. We didn't, because of me and a yearning I had.

To explain this better, I need to back up to the summer. I think that many of us who have gone to Foxfire workshops at Berea have encountered a problem. It's hard to describe it, but I think of it as the "project chase." At first you believe that the learning process is the most important thing, but somewhere down the line the idea of a fantastic end product knocks you cold. After that, the product is number one, and to achieve it and prove your worth as a teacher, if you're not careful, you take over.

After the play, the project chase took hold of me. We read Gurney Norman's short story, "The Wounded Man." The students liked the story, and since its focus was the idea that we should record old family stories, I assigned everyone to collect and write down at least one. They really enjoyed sharing these stories. Sometime after that it was decided that we would collect more and make a book.



Dennis Hillen, representing the class, calls Classic Printing. This was an exciting moment, since students had just voted to ditch the printer they had had.

The next thing I did still bothers me. I now realize that the book idea was mine. I don't think that I'll ever understand why I pushed them into a long-term project when we had been making such good progress previously. The students had been highly motivated, and were learning the skills I had set out to teach. The only reason I can come up with is that I wanted something wonderful to show everyone at the end of the year, and I felt this would happen only if I sold them on a long-term project.

My range of emotions about the events of this school year can be compared to the mountain scenery I can see outside my classroom window. Some days I feel I am on the peaks. Yet other days I feel I am rapidly descending or that I'm already down so deep in the valley that I'll never rise again. The one great thing about all this is that I've noticed my students don't share my feelings. They drag me back to the peaks again and again.

### *The project chase took hold of me...*

The book has taught me how doing a long-term project is different from doing a short one. It moves along more slowly, and excitement is not as much of a factor in motivation. The process is much more complicated. It is hard to see ahead of the students, and that causes me to pull back and not allow the students as much freedom as they need. Even though we have accomplished so much, I still will readily admit that on the whole this is kind of a puzzle or question to me.

And that leads me right back to where I started last summer. With a question! Sometime I get so disgusted I have to stop and evaluate. I always ask myself, "Am I really back at the beginning, or did I gain a few steps in the process?" So far, I've always honestly been able to reply, "You're not at the beginning. You have gained a few steps!"

I gained some this year. I can tell you that you can teach your class to think and plan as a group. You can use the simplest thing, such as the daily ten minutes, and have a successful hands-on, student-planned-and-directed activity that will teach what you intend it to. All of this is possible without doing some big project that will turn out a fancy end product.

Besides learning how the Foxfire approach works in a classroom, I have also learned a few things about myself this year. I now know it is frightening to be unsure of yourself and your teaching method. It is also very disconcerting to live the life of a question. This—the ideas and processes that are in my head and have become part of the way I teach and think—is the life I am leading now.

Just when I get something figured out, then I find out I need to know something more, and on it goes. But something I am sure of is that this is the way to teach and learn at the same time. The one thing that gives me hope and moves me on is that I know that my students hold the answer for me. Somewhere and someday we will find it on this learning journey that we are all taking together.

### 1989-90

That next year, school year 1989-90, I had to change to a combined first- and second-grade. Basically, I had to start over and learn how to teach this bunch of kids to think, plan, implement, and evaluate. They didn't know how to go to the bathroom, get their snack, and get out to recess on the first day. They had no idea how to discuss something, how to work in a group, how to plan, evaluate, or even work together for five minutes without killing one another. I told a visiting teacher it was like playing



"Mother, May I." I had to teach teeny weeny steps before we could accomplish something even like brainstorming. They all talked at the same time; they made fun of one another; they got into arguments if I turned my back to record on the board.

Did I give up? No. Did I cry and threaten to quit? Yes. But somewhere during the year it came together. We worked together, we planned together, they owned their classroom, and sometimes we even failed together. The largest "project" we did all year was to plan, write, and publish individual books for a Young Authors program that was shown off to the parents at a book fair.

We always had something in progress, and they had their hands into every bit of the planning. We wrote two sets of pen pals, we decorated our class together, we designed bulletin boards for the hallway, we chose and purchased a rabbit for a classroom pet, we worked together to plan our own schedule in our classroom—and the list goes on. I did learn that this "thing" is truly an idea, a process. It influences the way I think about children, learning, teaching, and school. It has become part of me, and since I now possess "it," I am able to share it with my students. From watching them, I know it is a never-ending process, because as they change, then they begin to change everyone around them: their parents, their friends, their classmates.

No one has ever been able to tell me exactly what we have accomplished, but I know that whatever has happened to us, it has empowered us. And it feels good.

### St. Francis Students Are Proud of Publication\*

*Time Changes*, a 50-page booklet of ghost stories, family histories, interviews, and stories was produced by the Fifth and Sixth Grade Class of St. Francis School in Pikeville, Pike County, Kentucky. Their teacher was Karen Adkins who led her students through a process of learning by experience. The front cover of their book features a quilt pattern, each piece representing a student's family.

"At first, nobody wanted to do a book. They thought we would have to write more. When people started bringing in stories, we got interested, so we decided to make a book. We had to write more than ever, but it was worth it. When we got the book back, we loved it," writes Chris Dawahare.

Jay Evangelista commented, "We didn't learn by a book, but we learned by making a book."

"This year our class did so much writing I thought our brains were going to turn into toothpaste. The book was a lot of hard work, but it sure looked good. We felt good, too!" relates Josh Lynch. Karen Adkins' students wrote these comments about their new publication, *Time Changes*.

They also shared these words of wisdom for us teachers. Jay continued, "She taught us how to use the hands on experience instead of working in a normal textbook. We still hate school, but since Mrs. Adkins came, it sure has changed."

"She rescued us by letting us choose what we wanted to do. I think all teachers should let their students choose. Take it from me, an expert student, Kristy Stump, you'll be their favorite teacher if you try doing something that they want to do once in a while."

"We decided to write a book after Mrs. Adkins read us a story called, 'The Wounded Man,' by Gurney Norman. We started to collect stories from our friends

and parents when they were young. In the very beginning Mrs. Adkins helped us, but then she stopped and made us make all the decisions on our own. We even called and talked to publishers, some who acted 'funny' because not many kids ever call them," Marissa Leedhanachoke wrote.

### Karen's Students Raise \$646\*

By Karen Adkins (St. Francis, Pikeville)

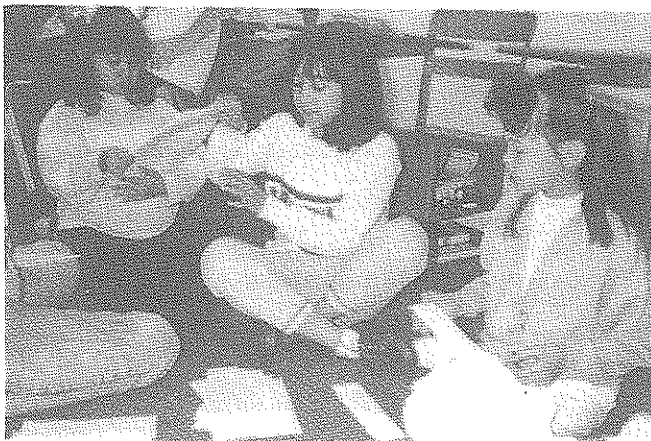
Friday, the last day of the school year, was zooming down upon me and my fifth and sixth grade students. As it approached, my feelings fluctuated between ecstasy and sadness. So much had happened this year and my students, and I were not really ready for the year to end.

We had been working on a book containing stories collected from families and friends since Halloween. The first layout was viewed and rejected by the class on April 20. I felt sick over the vote, but they were happy and we started over. We thought we would play it smart the second time around and invited the printer we had chosen to come in and give us pointers before we started our second layout. I pushed everyone hard, which caused problems, but we had it ready and to the printer by May 3. We had been given a ball-park estimate of \$200, so none of us were prepared for the shock waves that went through us when we got the exact cost, \$898.

It was a painful experience for the students, but we managed to learn many things from it. We had to come to grips with the idea that part of the mess was our fault as we didn't get a written estimate. The anger they felt about being treated dishonestly and unfairly as consumers was the worst part. The students snapped back quickly and made the decision to change printers. This time they sounded like old pros when they telephoned the new company and made all the arrangements. The book went back to the new printer on May 10 and we were ready to face the next problem, money.

We needed \$646! We had used most of our Foxfire grant money and had to look for other resources. Like a typical teacher, I panicked and thought we needed more grant money. I just didn't think I could live on a ledge for two weeks and had to be assured we would not be allowed to fall. The money was there if we needed it, but it was suggested that the students should be allowed to decide how to handle the situation. With this knowledge, I remained calm enough to let the students work on the problem. The children took over and decided to take advance book orders and sell snacks at school to raise the money. Dollars began to appear. We stayed after school one day to clean a van for a father with a reward of a \$50

\*From *Ramblings*.



Students worked in small groups on the book layout.

\*From *Ramblings*.

dollar bill. Friday, May 19, we were still short of our goal by \$27. No one seemed to mind when the principal gave us a check for that exact amount.

Monday, May 23, the book arrived and we spent hours poring over each page, noting every mistake, but so delighted over "their" book.

My major goal this year was to guide the students into some type of learning experience that would teach them to think and believe in themselves. I knew I had accomplished my goal when the students finished examining the book and one turned and said to me, "You know, Mrs. Adkins, if we had the printer's equipment, we could have printed this book ourselves. I know we could have done just as good or better than he did!"

Two of the students accompanied Karen to Unicoi State Park in Georgia in March of 1990 to present their publication at the Appalachian Studies Conference. Marissa Leedhanachoke and Erin Hatcher confidently told a group session how they "owned" this project from start to finish.



Marissa Leedhanachoke and Erin Hatcher make a presentation about their class at the 1990 Appalachian Studies Conference held at Unicoi State Park, near Helen, Georgia. Photo: Al Edwards.

Some of Karen Adkins' students' letters about their experiences to readers of Hands On.

Dear Teachers,

This past year we have used the hands-on teaching experience in English. It is seven times better than the boring English books that we used before Mrs. Adkins taught here. Some examples of this method are instead of learning newspaper skills from worksheets, we made our own paper all by ourselves and for Halloween we made our own plays in seven forty-five minute English periods. Now we are working on our own book.

I really think you should use Hands-on because we students think it is much more fun. Also, with the English book, we forget everything we learn within two weeks, but with the Hands-on experience we will always remember the skills that we learned.

Sincerely,

Dennis C. Hillen

Dear Teachers,

This year our teacher, Mrs. Adkins, has turned English into one of the best experiences of our life... the hands-on experience. We have still been learning English, but in another way besides working in the boring old English books.

We have been using the tactics that Mrs. Adkins has taught us to create and act out a play on tricks-or-treating, safety tips and to write a newspaper. That has led us to what we're now doing, a book of old, interesting stories from our families.

I would encourage you to teach your children the hands-on experience because they will learn more English than the English books could ever teach, and still have fun.

Sincerely,  
Josh Lynch

Dear Teachers,

Have you ever asked your class this question: Class, do you like working in your text books? If you haven't, please do. I guarantee most of your class will say no. Our teacher, Mrs. Adkins asked us if we liked working in our English book and our class said, "No." So Mrs. Adkins told us that we could do something else, but it would have to have something to do with English. We picked writing a book, and are almost done. So remember, ask the question.

Sincerely,  
Jay Evangelista

Reprinted from Hands On: A Journal for Teachers (Foxfire Fund, Rabun Gap, Georgia 30568 USA) Issue 37/38, Fall/Winter 1990.



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# WORLD NEWS AND REVIEWS

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## NATIONAL COALITION OF ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS (US)

The National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools (NCACS) will hold its annual National Conference on April 29 - May 3, 1992, at the Indianapolis Boys and Girls Camp outside Noblesville, Indiana. The cost for the four days will be US\$65 for adults and US\$45 for students, including meals. Accommodation will be cabins or camping. Everyone is expected to pitch in and help.

Several hundred people from alternative education programs through the USA and from several other countries are expected to attend. This is a good chance to meet people who have been involved in innovative education.

For further information, contact Faye Jenkins, 4069 Westover Drive, Indianapolis, IN 46268, USA (phone [317] 875 8472); or the NCACS National Office, 58 Schoolhouse Road, Summertown, TN 38483, USA.

## AERO-GRAMME SPECIAL ISSUE: ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION IN RUSSIA

*AERO-Gramme* is published by Jerry Mintz for the Alternative Education Resource Organisation (417 Roslyn Road, Roslyn Heights, NY 11577, USA). Issue #7 (December 1991) is a special issue outlining a visit to an alternative education conference in Russia in late 1991. In light of current events, *Connect* readers might be interested in its information and materials listed - it's an 8 page newsletter. Contact us if you're interested and we'll send on a copy to you.

## WORLD SUMMIT OF CHILDREN

Ute Roehl (Frans Halslaan 13; 1412 HS Narden, Netherlands) and Nina Lynn (PO Box 217, Newfane, Vt 05345, USA) are part of a group called United Nations of Youth. They are working towards a World Summit of Children in 1995.

## DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION CONFERENCE (US)

Advance notice has arrived of the Democracy and Education Conference, organised by the Institute for Democracy in Education, on June 25th-27th, 1992 in Athens, Ohio. The Conference theme is on 'Democracy through Diversity'. For more information:

Institute for Democracy in Education  
119 McCracken Hall  
Ohio University  
Athens, Ohio 45701-2979  
USA

## LIB ED (UK)

*Lib ED* is an 'alternative' British education magazine that has been published for nearly 25 years. The first bulletin of the Libertarian Teachers Association was published in April 1966. Since then, the magazine has changed its name to *Lib ED*, but the theme has remained consistent - that learning needs to be liberated from coercion.

*Lib ED* is now establishing itself as a publishing group, having already published a book on White Lion Free School (which closed recently) called **Free School: The White Lion Experience** and an international guide: **Freedom in Education: A Do-It-Yourself Guide**. They are planning a further title for 1992: **No Master, High or Low: Libertarian Education and Schooling in Britain**.

They are seeking financial support for this publishing enterprise, through offering UK50 pound shares, paid off in copies of the publications.

Contact *Lib ED* at their new address:

Libertarian Education  
Phoenix House, 170 Wells Road,  
Bristol BS4 2AG, UK

# NEW *FOXFIRE* PUBLICATIONS IN STOCK

## SOMETIMES A SHINING MOMENT

**The *Foxfire* Experience - Twenty Years Teaching in a High School Classroom**, Eliot Wigginton, Doubleday 1985.

Wigginton outlines the history of *Foxfire*, its philosophy, underlying approaches and details of his classes, lesson by lesson.

An inspiring and informative book with tons (oops tonnes) of ideas.



## **FOXFIRE: 25 YEARS**

\$25

**A Celebration of Our First Quarter Century**, edited by Eliot Wigginton and his students, Doubleday, 1991.

This is the most recently available book from and about *Foxfire*. Its editors include students who visited Australia in 1990 and 1991. There are interviews with Wigginton, early *Foxfire* students and community members. This is a dynamic illustration of the classroom approaches underlying the *Foxfire* approach to teaching and learning.

\$30

**A FOXFIRE CHRISTMAS - Appalachian Memories and Traditions**, edited by Eliot Wigginton, Doubleday, 1990.

This came out just before Christmas 1990 and was a best-seller in the US. Put together, in the *Foxfire* style, by students (including those visiting in 1991), it is a handsome, hard-cover volume which illustrates the *Foxfire* approach, as well as being a great gift. Limited numbers of copies are available!

\$30

**FOXFIRE 9**, edited by Eliot Wigginton, Doubleday.

The ninth and most recent collection of articles from the *Foxfire* classes at Rabun County School - an essential illustration of what students can produce. Limited numbers of copies are available.

\$30

## YOU AND AUNT ARIE

Pamela Wood, IDEAS, 1978.

Still a definitive 'how-to-do-it' guide to producing oral history publications with students. It contains sections on interviewing, transcribing, layout, indexing, photography etc. The approaches are based on the experiences of *Foxfire*, *Salt* and other US student-produced magazines. Long out of stock in Australia - a new shipment is due in late January: reserve your copy NOW!

\$20

## SHINING MOMENTS

A one-hour video on the *Foxfire* approach to teaching. **Connect** has a copy for loan - \$5 to cover postage (loans for a week or less please; call us or write with requests). The Victorian Country Education Project also has a both a one-hour and a ten-minute version of this video for loan - (03) 329 5677.

*All prices include packaging and postage.*

ALL NOW AVAILABLE FROM  
**CONNECT: ORDER FORM ON THE  
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# CLEARINGHOUSE

## Local and Overseas Publications Received

**Connect** receives many publications directly or indirectly relevant to youth and student participation. We can't lend or sell these, but if you want to look at or use them, contact us on (03) 489 9052:

### AUSTRALIAN STUDENT PUBLICATIONS:

**The Legend** (Paralowie School, SA) Nov/Dec 1991

**Satellite** (Melton SC, Vic) 1990, 1991

**Student Underground** (Resistance) October 1991, January 1992

**Educating Others; Educating Ourselves - Students' Research and Action in Melton**; January 1991

### OTHER PUBLICATIONS:

**Options** (Youth Bureau, Canberra, ACT) November, December 1991; January 1992

**Collective Notes** (COSHG, Vic) Nos 68, 69; December 1991; February 1992

**Democracy and Education** (Ohio, UK) Vol 6 No 2; Winter 1991

**Exploring Your World With Newspapers** (ANPA, USA) Teachers' Guide

**NIE Update** (ANPA, USA) Vol 17 No 4, Fall 1991

**Hands On** (Foxfire Teacher Outreach, Georgia, USA) Issue 39, Spring 1991

**Retention Matters!** (Staying On, Riverina Region, NSW) Vol 3, Spring 1991

**National Coalition News** (NCACS, USA) Vol 16 Nos 2, 3; Summer-Fall 1991

**AERO-Gramme** (AERO, New York, USA) Nos 7, 8; December 1991, Winter 1992

**Youth Issues Forum** (YACVic, Vic) Summer 1991-92

**Network News** (Surry Hills, NSW) Dec 1991

**SCIP Newsletter** (SCIP, Red Cross, Vic) No 16, November 1991

**Lib Ed** (Bristol, UK) No 17/18; Winter 1991-92

**Where To Now?** (CEP, Vic) November 1991

## Articles:

The articles listed in this column are of general background value or otherwise not appropriate for reproducing in the columns of **Connect**. However they are available on photocopy for research purposes. The length and cost (copying and postage) are listed. Please order by code number. (A fuller list is available in **Connect** 46/47 - to October 1987.)

Code	Description/Pages/Cost
369	"Budget Cuts May Silence a School's Voice" in <i>Los Angeles Times</i> - April 30, 1991 (2 pp; \$0.60)
370	<b>Program 1991 WACOS Residential Camp</b> (SA) 26-28 October 1991 (4 pp; \$0.70)

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\* Index to contents of back issues (\$3) \$ .....

\* Students and Work - 1985 Connect reprint booklet #5 (\$3) \$ .....

\* 'Youth Radio' issue of 3CR's **CRAM Guide** (1985) (\$1) \$ .....

\* Radio Times - Broadcasting Handbook (\$3) \$ .....

\* Sometimes a Shining Moment (Wigginton) (\$25) \$ .....

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\* Foxfire: 25 Years (Doubleday) (\$30) \$ .....

\* A Foxfire Christmas (Doubleday hardcover) (\$30) \$ .....

\* Shining Moments - Foxfire video (1 hour) (loan for 1 week: \$5) \$ .....

\* You and Aunt Arie (Wood, IDEAS) (\$20) \$ .....

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\* SRC Pamphlets Set (6 pamphlets; Youth Affairs Council of Victoria) (\$5) \$ .....

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